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Her First Scoop



T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
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T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

HER FIRST SCOOP

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

LINDSEY BARBEE

AUTHOR OF

"After the Game," "At the End of the Rainbow," "The Dream That Came True," "The Fifteenth of January," "Then Greek Met Greek," "The Kingdom of Heart's Content," "The Promise of Tomorrow," "Sing a Song of Seniors," "The Thread of Destiny," "Tomorrow at Ten," "A Trial of Hearts," "When the Clock Strikes Twelve," "The Whole Truth," "In the College Days," "Little Men and Women in Stageland," etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

219172

HER FIRST SCOOP

CHARACTERS.

STANLEY LEE *A Young Millionaire*
RUTH KING..... } *Reporters on the Staff of*
MADGE MARSHALL } *The Morning Star.*
MAGGIE *A Maid*

PLACE—*One End of a Tea Room on a Rainy Afternoon.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Forty-five Minutes.*

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STORY OF THE PLAY.

Ruth King and Madge Marshall, clever young reporters on a daily paper, meet on a rainy afternoon at a tea room. Ruth, who is on the lowest round of the journalistic ladder, confides to her companion that an opportunity for promotion has at last presented itself in the shape of a particular assignment, but adds that she has failed to land the "scoop." She relates her fruitless attempt to gain an interview with Stanley Lee, a young millionaire, who is in the city on an interesting mission, namely, the disposal of a large sum bequeathed to the community by his father, and is in despair because she has not succeeded in her quest. Madge assures her that stratagem is a reporter's best asset, and with this advice leaves her. While waiting for her order to be filled, Ruth wanders to the window, and as she gazes out abstractedly sees the object of her thoughts, the elusive millionaire. For a moment she hesitates, then asks the maid who has brought in her tea to summon the young man to her. He enters, she rushes impulsively to him, greets him as the husband of her best friend and cleverly invents an excuse for their meeting. The man accepts the situation, falls in with the story, parries the questions and apparently enjoys the tête-à-tête. Ruth skilfully introduces the subject of the memorial fund and gleans enough from his conversation to furnish ample material for her article. As they finish their tea, and there is no further excuse for lingering, her duplicity overwhelms her and she confesses the scheme by which she has forced the information which she wished. To her surprise he takes the confession calmly, declares that he has from the first been aware of her identity and that he has given her the desired news freely and gladly as a poor return for the enjoyment of the chat. The interview ends with a friendly handshake over the teacups.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

RUTH AND MADGE—Bright, clever, up-to-date young women. They wear simple street gowns, plain hats and long raincoats. Ruth's hat has a drenched and drooping feather.

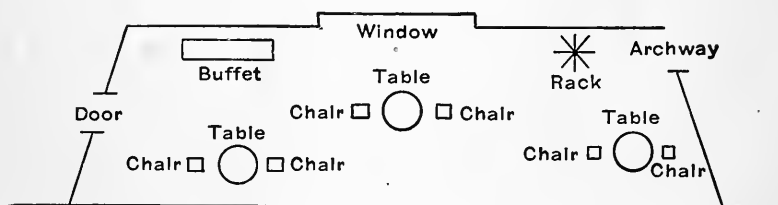
MAGGIE—Conventional maid's costume.

STANLEY—Courteous, alert, with a keen sense of humor. He wears a plain, dark suit, slouch hat and raincoat.

PROPERTIES.

Buffet with silver, glass, etc. Rack for hats and coats. Three small tables. Six straight chairs. Silver, napkins, lunch cloths, menu cards, flowers, etc., for tables. Muslin curtains for window. Gloves, watch and raincoat for Madge. Umbrella, coat and rubbers for Ruth. Hat and raincoat for Stanley. Check blanks, tray with cups, saucers, muffins, marmalade, teapot, sugar and cream for Maggie.

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *D. F.*, door in flat or scene running across the back of the stage; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

HER FIRST SCOOP

SCENE: One end of tea room. Archway at L. U. E. leading to room beyond. Practical door down R. Long, low window C. in F. with dainty sash curtains. Small tables down C. at L. 2 E. and at R. 2 E. Rack for hats and coats L. of C. in F. Serving buffet R. of C. in F. with silver, glass, etc. Two straight chairs at each table. Each table is set with lunch cloth, napkins, silver, menu card, flowers, etc. Center table in addition bears small teapot, cup and saucer, plate, cream, sugar, etc. On the rack L. of C. in F. there hangs a long raincoat.

Curtain rises on MADGE, seated R. of central table and MAGGIE, busying herself at the buffet. Stage is well illuminated, since it is afternoon.

MADGE (*putting on her gloves*). Give me my check, Maggie, and I'll be on my way.

MAGGIE (*glancing out the window*). It's a pretty watery way, Miss Madge.

MADGE. Still raining?

MAGGIE. Cats and dogs. (*Anxiously*.) Shall I call you a taxi?

MADGE (*smiling*). Hardly. Taxis are not for hard-working reporters, Maggie. If a second flood were upon the world, and the rest of you were hurrying to a safe Mount Ararat, duty would force me to keep pencil and paper above the billows in order to prepare for a possible extra.

MAGGIE. How you do put things, Miss Madge. (*Prepares check and lays it on table*.)

MADGE (*taking up check*). The journalistic path, Maggie, seldom blossoms the proverbial rose. On a day like this I am easily persuaded that a handful of thistles is mine for the grasping.

MAGGIE (*sympathetically*). Hasn't today's work been pleasant?

MADGE (*carelessly*). Oh, pleasant enough, I suppose. I've been interviewing a theatrical star.

MAGGIE (*excitedly*). Not *really*?

MADGE. Oh, yes. (*Teasingly*.) I suppose you think that her twinkle is enough to make a rift in any raincloud.

MAGGIE (*rapturously*). A *real* star!

MADGE. All that twinkle are not stars, Maggie—to be quite blunt and commonplace.

MAGGIE (*anxiously*). Oh, Miss Madge, you don't mean—

MADGE (*laughing as she interrupts*). Far be it from me to knock the pedestal from under the popular idol. When the public devours my perfectly constructed interview in tomorrow's paper, there will be no trace of the lady's double negatives, mixed verb tenses and merciless assault upon the structure of English grammar.

RUTH *enters L. U. E. and stands in archway. Her coat bears evidence of the storm, the feather in her hat droops forlornly.*

MADGE. Well, *whom* have we here? (*Rises.*)

RUTH (*extending a dripping umbrella*). Niobe, dripping with the tears of an unfriendly heaven.

MAGGIE (*rushing forward and taking the umbrella*). Why, Miss Ruth!

MADGE (*crossing to RUTH and seizing her arm*). You're soaked! (*Removes the coat and hands it to MAGGIE.*) Here, Maggie, hang this by a friendly fire. (*To RUTH.*) Take off those rubbers. (*RUTH obeys and MAGGIE takes them.*)

RUTH (*as MADGE attempts to remove her hat*). Please don't take my hat. (*Gently pushes her away.*) The feather is so symbolical of myself—pathetically apathetic, apathetically pathetic and swayed by each blast of the editorial scorn. (*MAGGIE with coat and rubbers exits at R.*)

MADGE (*scoldingly*). Pretty fix for a girl just over grippe. Why are you out in this beastly weather? (*Pulls out chair L. of table at C. and motions her to it.*)

RUTH (*pausing by the window and looking out*). Rain plashing—thunder crashing—lightning flashing! Just the

kind of a day that the forlorn heroine is thrust out into the cold, cold world.

MADGE (*impatiently*). You talk like a penny edition. Come, sit down.

RUTH (*as she seats herself*). Penny edition! You're just right. Maybe the rest of you can sell for five cents, but I'm not worth the conventional copper.

MADGE (*as she sits R. of table*). Something's gone to your head.

RUTH. No; to my feet, Madge—to my feet. They're so heavy I can scarcely raise them.

MADGE. Then why do you venture out in a drenching rain?

RUTH (*patiently*). For a five-cent edition, Madge, you do ask such silly questions. Why shouldn't I be out? Even if I haven't reached your round in the reportorial ladder, I'm on the payroll.

MADGE. But my *dear*! Can't the society items be gleaned by use of the telephone? And a possible function be reached by a convenient street car?

RUTH (*gravely gazing at an extended foot*). These feet, Madge, have been sacrificed to no unworthy quest. They have been soaked, battered and bruised in a search for The Unattainable!

MADGE. But—

RUTH (*interrupting*). But me no buts—suggest me no taxis. When one pursues The Unattainable she must wearily follow in his wake, persistently dog his footsteps and uncomplainingly wear out shoe leather in a frenzied effort to keep pace.

MADGE. The emphasis placed upon the masculine pronoun and the frequency of its use lead me to believe that there's a man in the case.

RUTH (*mockingly*). "Oh, wise young judge!"

MADGE (*complacently*). So let's have the story.

Enter MAGGIE from R. She comes directly to the table and gathers up the teapot, cup, saucer, etc.

MAGGIE. Your coat is drying beautifully, Miss Ruth. Now can't I bring you some tea?

RUTH. Oh, if you will, Maggie. Make it piping hot. (MAGGIE *starts to R.*) And Maggie! (MAGGIE *turns.*) Some English muffins, too. (MAGGIE *nods and again starts to R.*) And—oh, Maggie! (MAGGIE *turns.*) Might I have some marmalade?

MAGGIE. A whole jar of it, Miss Ruth. (*Exit R.*)

RUTH (*sighing*). Now that's better. I begin to revive.

MADGE (*abruptly*). Who is the man?

RUTH (*in pretended perplexity*). The *man*? Oh, yes; the *man*.

MADGE. There *is* a man, I believe you said.

RUTH. *You* said so, my dear.

MADGE. Well, isn't there?

RUTH. I'm not quite sure. I can't get near enough to find out.

MADGE. You haven't been pursuing him?

RUTH. Certainly.

MADGE (*in horror*). *Ruth!*

RUTH. But he's The Unattainable. Isn't it quite customary and conventional to pursue The Unattainable?

MADGE (*sternly*). Suppose you tell your story, Ruth—and tell it *straight*.

RUTH. Well, then, the man is Stanley Lee.

MADGE (*in surprise*). Stanley Lee?

RUTH (*complacently*). *The Stanley Lee.*

MADGE. You mean that—(*hesitates*).

RUTH. I have been chosen to interview him? Yes.

MADGE. How ridiculous!

RUTH. Your surprise is hardly flattering.

MADGE. It isn't surprise, my dear; it's amazement that so great a task has been placed upon your inexperienced shoulders.

RUTH. Experienced shoulders were not forthcoming. The assignment was Miss Babcock's, but a sudden headache laid her low and when the news of her collapse reached the office I was the only available substitute.

MADGE. Most of us would have balked at the job.

RUTH. Not I. I kept saying to myself, "It's my chance—it's my chance!" (*After a moment.*) And now—I've failed!

MADGE (*comfortingly*). My dear, you're not alone in your failure. An interview with a Lee would indeed be a bright star in the crown of any ambitious journalist.

RUTH. Are these Lees *just* millionaires?

MADGE. *Just* millionaires! How scornfully you put it.

RUTH. I mean, have they done anything but get rich?

MADGE (*thoughtfully*). No-o, I don't believe so.

RUTH. Then why does such mystery surround them?

MADGE. As far as I can see, any mystery is due to the fact that father and son have steadfastly refused to be interviewed upon any subject whatever. Doubtless, family tradition holds that greatness of isolation is preferable to greatness through publicity.

RUTH. Tell me something about the family itself.

MADGE. There's little to tell. John Lee, the father, spent his boyhood in this city, but later moved to New York, where he amassed his millions, centered his interests and—incidentally—died. Seemingly he severed all connection with the home of his youth. So you may imagine the consternation of our good citizens when they read in the will of the magnate that a certain sum was to be bestowed upon this particular community, for the purpose of a memorial.

RUTH (*scornfully*). A memorial! Is it to be a life size statue in the public square, a marble shaft in the cemetery, or a drinking fountain in the park?

MADGE. *That*, my dear, was for you to find out; for the son is guardian of the memorial fund with full power to dispose of it. Doubtless he is here for the purpose of revealing his intentions.

RUTH (*impatiently*). Then why on earth won't he be interviewed? Any investment of the fund must be made public sooner or later. This aloofness is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of.

MADGE (*jokingly*). How does he know that the fund will be the sole subject of the interview? He may fear that he will be asked to discuss the latest fashions, the political situation or the suffrage question.

RUTH. Don't be silly, Madge.

MADGE. Or perhaps he is afraid—and justly so—that the interviewer may be middle-aged, severely clad—and cross-eyed.

RUTH. That should be no excuse for avoiding the press.

MADGE. Oh, but it is. To pour out one's heart to such a vision would be a mere waste of good ammunition. (*Suddenly.*) Then, again, the fellow may be like his father—cross and crotchety.

RUTH. Oh, no, he isn't. (*Sighs.*) He's—heavenly.

MADGE (*suspiciously*). I thought you hadn't met him.

RUTH. I've only seen him, for one may be given a vision of The Unattainable even if she is denied the real presence thereof.

MADGE (*decisively*). Tell me just what you've done in regard to this interview.

RUTH. And confess what I haven't done? Well, *first*, I braved the lion in his hotel den and sent up my card with "Morning Star" in the corner.

MADGE (*shaking her head*). Bad move, my dear. The name of your paper was a dead give away. A reporter's chief asset is stratagem.

RUTH (*resignedly*). Evidently. For I was politely informed that Mr. Lee was too busy for an interview. After a becoming interval, I telephoned, hoping that my dulcet tones would soothe the savage breast. Nothing doing. The tones in which he answered me were just as dulcet as my own, but they were final.

MADGE. Blow number two! Did you have the strength for a third encounter?

RUTH. The spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. I hung around the hotel lobby, bribed the clerk to point out the Desired One and planned an ambush. The Desired One came—I saw—and he conquered as far as I was concerned.

I didn't have the nerve to accost him Madge, he was too good looking.

MADGE (*sarcastically*). If I may be allowed an observation, Ruth, *nerve* is a second attribute of a reporter.

RUTH. Don't I know it? But even if I possessed it in maximum degree, what could I have done in this rainy day rig? Why, he wouldn't have looked at me. (*Leaning forward.*) If I may be allowed an observation, Madge, raiment is a *very* necessary attribute of a reporter when a man is concerned.

MADGE. Why didn't you faint at his feet?

RUTH (*disdainfully touching her feather*). With this feather? Not much. Anyway, one of the bellboys would have picked me up and he would have gone blithely on his way—uninterviewed!

MADGE. So that ends your story.

RUTH. Oh, no. The first exercise in my childhood copy book was "Try, try again," and I've always felt it my duty to live up to it. I dogged the footsteps of The Unattainable to a taxi, recklessly hailed a similar vehicle and followed my victim—for all the world like Sherlock Holmes. As a reward for my persistency and extravagance I saw him disappear into the sacred precincts of the Kennicott Club. Even the boldest of reporters does not enter this region. So I took up vigil by a neighboring lamp-post.

MADGE (*in horror*). Ruth! You *didn't*! And just over grippe. Why didn't you think?

RUTH. The only kind of grippe I thought of, my dear, was the very material kind which—metaphorically speaking—would draw The Unattainable to me.

MADGE. And you waited?

RUTH. I waited—alone with the elements. Sounds romantic, doesn't it? While The Unattainable smoked, read and did all the customary stunts that Unattainables indulge in, quite unconscious of the Peri at the gates.

MADGE. How long did you wait?

RUTH. Centuries, I think. Maybe it was about two hours. At last he emerged; so I wearily tracked him to the

hotel and played my last trump, which proved to be a two-spot. I sent up another card, this time without the tell-tale "Morning Star," trusting that he would forget the earlier appearance of the selfsame name and would imagine the caller some old friend of his mother who—(*hesitates for a moment*) well, he didn't.

MADGE (*sympathetically*). Poor child!

RUTH. But that isn't the worst. I've saved the real blow till the last. When he came out of the club, who do you suppose was with him? (*Impressively.*) John Hall of the "Evening Sun." That means I'm beaten; that the triumph of interviewing the un-interviewable belongs to the rival paper.

MADGE (*indignantly*). You shouldn't have been given the assignment.

RUTH. Oh, yes, I should. I can write, if I do say it, as shouldn't, and I am capable of far more than trivial chronicles of pink teas and inane descriptions of other women's clothes.

MADGE. I don't doubt it. But—

RUTH (*suddenly*). Madge, is everybody forced to sojourn in the purgatory of the social column before she reaches the journalistic paradise?

MADGE. That depends—

RUTH (*quickly*). Upon chance, doesn't it? (*Seriously.*) Well, this was my chance—and it's gone forever. If I—first of all—could have interviewed him; if I could have forestalled the other paper, it would have been a scoop, a *real* scoop—my first scoop! It would have meant promotion; it would have given me—

MADGE (*rising*). Many things, of course. (*Cheerfully.*) But, never mind; the opportunity will come again, and will be all the better for the delay. (*Glances at watch.*) I must be off.

RUTH (*pleadingly*). Oh, wait for me. I won't be long, for I'm due at Marsh's pretty soon.

MADGE. *Marsh's?*

RUTH. Of course. The store is having its spring millinery opening. Pretty weather for openings, isn't it?

MADGE (*positively*). You're going directly home from here, Ruth King.

RUTH. Of course I'm not. Having failed my big assignment, do you think I'll neglect my daily duty and lose my daily bread?

MADGE. I'll write up the opening for you. I'm going that way.

RUTH (*laughing*). You describe those hats? Oh, Madge, you're funny! Please don't mind my laughing; but it's just like asking a football man to play croquet.

MADGE. Your simile is ill chosen, fair maid. Even if I do fall heir to some heavy write-ups, there's enough of the eternal feminine left to manage a millinery opening, and to manage it successfully.

RUTH (*eagerly*). Then you really mean it? (*Rises.*) Bless you, Madge. I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am. In my present state of mind, all hats would look to me just like—(*grasping feather*) this feather!

MADGE (*critically*). Then it's much better for you to shift the responsibility to me. (*Knits her brow.*) Let's see. How do I begin the thing?

RUTH. Something like this. (*Recites mechanically.*) Outside there were dark and lowering clouds; inside, spring flowers reigned supreme and nodded in contentment from the Parisian creations destined to adorn the fairest maids and matrons of our city.

MADGE (*disgustedly*). What stuff!

RUTH. But the dear public likes it.

MADGE. Give me a few technical phrases.

RUTH (*thoughtfully*). Well, "ravishing creation" is always good; "effective combination" is a close second; "breath of Paris" always makes a hit; and you can't use "smart," "chic" and "attractive" too many times.

MADGE (*moving to L. U. E.*). Great heavens! (*Takes coat from rack and puts it on.*)

RUTH. And, Madge, if some particular chapeau is indescribably ugly, put it down as "a thought and a hatpin." That's safe, and leaves much to the imagination.

MADGE. And proves my former statement that a reporter's chief asset is stratagem. (*Exit L. U. E., then looks in again.*) Stratagem, Ruth, stratagem! (*Exit L. U. E.*)

RUTH *goes to window and gazes out pensively. Enter MAGGIE at R. with tray of tea, muffins, marmalade, etc.*

MAGGIE (*as she arranges articles on table at C.*). Here you are, Miss Ruth—muffins, marmalade and all.

RUTH (*still gazing out window*). You don't know how good that sounds to me. For as I stood in the rain today I would have given half my kingdom for one of these big, brown, crisp, buttered—(*her voice trails into nothingness and she seems fascinated by some unusual sight outside the window.*)

MAGGIE (*still busy*). Yes? (*No response, MAGGIE glances up quickly.*) Why, Miss Ruth, what is it?

RUTH (*regaining her composure*). Nothing. At least—well—I just happened to see—a friend—outside. (*Suddenly.*) Maggie, will you do something for me?

MAGGIE. You know I will, Miss Ruth.

RUTH (*excitedly*). Then, come here! (*MAGGIE hurries to window.*) And look! (*Points.*) Do you see the tall man with the slouch hat over there? He's just coming away from the window.

MAGGIE (*equally excited*). Yes—oh, yes! (*As she gazes.*) Isn't—he—perfectly—splendid?

RUTH (*turning from window*). Now, Maggie, listen. You are to rush out to the door, wave your arms—so—(*illustrating, MAGGIE imitates*) and attract his attention. When he looks at you, you're to beckon wildly—so—(*MAGGIE imitates her gesture*) just as if someone were in dreadful danger. Probably he'll tear madly across the street, and as he reaches you you must say—rather breathlessly, "She's waiting." (*MAGGIE nods.*) And then you're to usher him in here (*as she pushes MAGGIE toward L. U. E.*), while I do the rest!

MAGGIE (*turning at L. U. E.*). It's just like a play, Miss Ruth! (*Exit.*)

RUTH. A play! I wonder if it will be tragedy—comedy—or farce! (*Stands irresolute.*) Madge said to use strata-gem. Well—(*as she shrugs her shoulders*) so be it! (*Gazes out window.*) He sees her—he's coming! (*Comes down C. to front of stage, looks nervously around.*) Now you've done it, Ruth King, you've done it!

Enter MAGGIE L. U. E., followed by STANLEY LEE. She stands aside.

MAGGIE. In here, sir. (*RUTH turns, smiles brightly and hurries to STANLEY with both hands outstretched. He looks bewildered, but meets her half way and greets her cordially.*)

RUTH (*after they have shaken hands*). And to think that I might have lost you! If I hadn't been looking out of the window that very moment you probably would have gone right by. (*As he endeavors to speak.*) Yes, I know this tea-room is off the shopping thoroughfare, but I thought it would be all the nicer and cozier on that account, and that we could have a real visit together. (*Moves toward table at C. and motions him to chair L. of table.*) There's your place—and (*turning*) Maggie! Another cup and saucer, please. (*MAGGIE hurries to buffet and places another cup and saucer on table. STANLEY hangs his coat and hat on rack and quickly returns to table.*) You see, I had really just about given you up and had resigned myself to a solitary cup of tea. (*She is about to draw out chair R. of table when he springs forward and does it for her. She seats herself and smiles archly up at him.*) Thank you! (*As he seats himself opposite.*) And it would have been such a disappointment not to meet you—and to know you—after I'd counted so much on it. When Julie telephoned this morning that she couldn't come, I was positively sick about it, but when she added that you would keep the appointment just the same, life brightened. (*To MAGGIE, who has been waiting.*) That will do, Maggie. I'll call you if we wish anything else. (*Exit MAGGIE, R.*) Really, it's awfully good of

you to come and to bore yourself with me just because I'm your wife's best friend.

STANLEY. I'm beginning to think that it's awfully jolly to have the opportunity.

RUTH. Just think! You and Julie have been married six months. I can't realize it.

STANLEY. It's hard—very hard—for *me* to realize it.

RUTH (*leaning over table*). I should never have recognized you from the picture Julie sent.

STANLEY. Just how did you recognize me, anyway?

RUTH (*confused*). Why—I—well—I just *knew* you, that's all.

STANLEY. Woman's intuition. I suppose the picture flattered.

RUTH. I'm not saying. Anyway, it was only a snapshot.

STANLEY. Snapshots aren't particularly reliable as a means of tracing undiscovered husbands.

RUTH (*laughing*). Undiscovered no longer. Shall we drink to this mutual recognition—with a cup of tea? (*Pours tea.*)

STANLEY (*as he watches her*). I say. This is regularly jolly.

RUTH. Isn't it, though! (*Takes sugar bowl.*) How many lumps?

STANLEY. Two. Julie asked me that same question on our wedding journey—and it told the whole story. After that, fate marked us for her particular bride and groom.

RUTH (*nervously*). Oh! Your wedding journey! Not really! You don't mean that. (*Hesitates.*)

STANLEY. Mean what? (*In her confusion RUTH drops three lumps of sugar in his cup. He catches her hand.*)¹ Look here; that's three lumps already. I don't need sweetening to that extent. (*Releases her hand and looks laughingly at her.*)

RUTH (*fishing out a lump*). I don't believe you need it at all. (*Hastily.*) Of course I draw my conclusions from what Julie has said.

STANLEY. The prattle of a six months' bride isn't always authentic.

RUTH (*indicating*). Here are muffins. There is marmalade. Help yourself.

STANLEY (*suiting the action to the word*). Still a muffin fiend, aren't you? And is this the same brand of marmalade that used to adorn your college room?

RUTH (*in surprise*). Now—how did you know *that*?

STANLEY. Julie told me, of course.

RUTH. *Julie?*

STANLEY. Isn't it the natural thing for her to talk about her best friend? I'd know you just from her description. Only last night she said, "Ruth's eyes have the most impish twinkle"—

RUTH (*wildly*). Ruth! *Ruth!*

STANLEY (*in affected surprise*). Isn't that your name?

RUTH (*composing herself*). Why—of course—only—

STANLEY. Aren't you going to let your best friend's husband have the fun of calling you—(*softly*) Ruth?

RUTH. I'd be very silly not to want him to do it. And isn't he going to let his wife's best friend have the fun of calling him—(*hesitates*)

STANLEY (*quickly*). Jack. Say it, please.

RUTH (*off her guard*). *Jack!* That isn't your name—(*confusedly*) at least, oh, I didn't mean that.

STANLEY. John is my first name. Julie always calls me Jack. How strange you didn't know!

RUTH (*airily*). Not strange at all. She usually refers to you in—well, endearing phrases.

STANLEY. Do you think I'm worth them?

RUTH. How can I answer such a question? If I say *yes*, you'll think—well, never mind what you'll think. If I say *no*, you won't like it. (*Sighs.*) Men are such exacting creatures!

STANLEY. And women are so designing!

RUTH. Now stop, for in a moment we'll be arguing, and an argument upon first acquaintance is fatal. Tell me instead about the new home.

STANLEY (*blankly*). The new home? Oh, yes—the new home. Well—it's new—for one thing.

RUTH (*mockingly*). What a lucid description! I can just see it. Anyway, it's near enough for Julie to come to the city for her shopping.

STANLEY (*eagerly*). And for you to spend an occasional week-end with us.

RUTH (*severely*). Are you so enthusiastic and hospitable to all of Julie's friends?

STANLEY (*grinning*). No—just to you.

RUTH (*hastily*). And is the new car satisfactory?

STANLEY. Corking. If the roads had been good, I should have swept majestically into your nice little city and would have been hailed as a personage.

RUTH. One personage a day is enough (*after a moment*), Jack!

STANLEY. What do you mean by *that* (*after a moment*), Ruth?

RUTH. Haven't you heard that the great and omnipotent Lee is in our midst?

STANLEY. Who's he?

RUTH (*mockingly*). "Not to know him argues yourself unknown!"

STANLEY (*suddenly*). You don't happen to mean Stanley Lee?

RUTH. Who else?

STANLEY. Oh, come now! He's not great and omnipotent. It isn't fair to impose that sentence upon the man when he isn't guilty.

RUTH. How do you know he isn't?

STANLEY. Because.

RUTH. That's a woman's reason. Be original.

STANLEY. Well—he happens to be my best friend.

RUTH (*in surprise*). What?

STANLEY. My room-mate at college. (*Insinuatingly.*) Didn't Julie tell you?

RUTH (*coolly*). Julie may be excused for omitting a few details of your past history.

STANLEY. He was my best man. Didn't Julie tell you *that*?

RUTH (*pondering*). Why, of course. It had just slipped my mind.

STANLEY. So, you see, I know him about as well as I know myself.

RUTH. Terribly good-looking, isn't he?

STANLEY (*off his guard*). Not at all.

RUTH. Exceedingly clever?

STANLEY. Not a bit of it.

RUTH. Disgustingly rich?

STANLEY. He can't help that.

RUTH. My! For a best friend you are certainly uncomplimentary. Sounds like one woman describing another.

STANLEY. I'm defending him. All this poppycock stuff about his millions is his particular abomination. Why, he's as simple in his tastes as I am.

RUTH. Simple enough to partake of muffins and marmalade?

STANLEY (*fervently*). He'd love it!

RUTH. With a girl in a dilapidated feather?

STANLEY. He wouldn't even look at the feather. He'd see only the girl (*softly*), as I do.

RUTH (*nervously*). How perfectly ridiculous of him. Let me pour you some tea. (*As she pours.*) Too bad you haven't run across him today. (*Hands him his cup and saucer.*)

STANLEY (*calmly*). Oh, I have. We lunched together at the club.

RUTH. Really! Did he reveal the purpose of his visit here?

STANLEY. Oh, yes. His father lived here as a boy, you know, and always had a real affection for the place.

RUTH. That isn't why he came, is it?

STANLEY. Not altogether. Mr. Lee, in his will, left a large sum to the city, and Stan is to use it as he sees best.

RUTH (*trying not to be excited*). Has he decided what to do with the money?

STANLEY. Not yet. He is quite open to suggestions.

RUTH. Perhaps a statue of his father for the public square would solve the difficulty.

STANLEY (*emphatically*). Hardly. Mr. Lee was not the man to seek publicity.

RUTH (*quickly*). Even through a newspaper. Why was it?

STANLEY. Excessive modesty for one thing, and a loathing of the press, due to several gross misrepresentations.

RUTH. Oh, I see.

STANLEY. His many charities were unchronicled. He gave lavishly, but quietly.

RUTH. Will the son do likewise?

STANLEY. To the best of his ability. He's a bit of a socialist and is eager to share his inheritance.

RUTH. Has he been interviewed—by the two rival papers?

STANLEY. No, he refused. Due to an inherited dislike of newspaper notoriety.

RUTH (*eagerly*). You mean that he has not confided his plans to either paper?

STANLEY. I certainly do. Even an old college friend, who is on the "Evening Sun," had no influence.

RUTH (*half rising*). You're sure of this?

STANLEY (*in surprise*). Why, of course I'm sure of it. What's the matter?

RUTH (*subsiding*). Nothing—why, *nothing*. What put *that* in your head?

STANLEY (*suspiciously*). You seem pretty interested in Stanley Lee.

RUTH. I'm *not*! I'm simply thrilled by the fact that he intends to leave some of his perfectly good money in this city. (*After a moment, with forced indifference.*) Haven't you an idea of what he intends to do with the bequest?

STANLEY. Not the slightest. Neither has he.

RUTH (*impulsively*). I wish *I* had the disposal of it!

STANLEY. What would you do?

RUTH (*enthusiastically*). First, I'd build a children's hospital—a big, bright, beautiful place where poor little waifs could be cared for, comforted and cured; where they could

be made so well and strong that they would start in life equipped, at least, with the blessing of health. I can imagine nothing more beautiful than that.

STANLEY (*watching her*). Nor can I.

RUTH. And then I'd found a scholarship in one college for some worthy fellow who craves an education and hasn't the money to satisfy the desire.

STANLEY (*thoughtfully*). That would have appealed to Mr. Lee. He was a poor boy himself and never had the training which would have meant so much to him.

RUTH. And *then*—(*pauses*).

STANLEY (*eagerly*). And then?

RUTH (*mischievously*). I'd put a coat of paint on the roof of the City Park Pavilion. It needs it. (*He gazes abstractedly at her without smiling.*) Dear me! Have I said something that I shouldn't?

STANLEY. Hardly.

RUTH. You look so—well, *intense*.

STANLEY. I am thinking that, after all, Fate is responsible for our meeting.

RUTH (*nervously*). Nonsense. A two-cent stamp and being Julie's best friend did the deed.

STANLEY. Let's leave Julie quite out of the question—for the time being.

RUTH. How can we? She's a sort of missing link. Anyway, I don't *want* to leave her out of the question.

STANLEY. What we have to say concerns John Stanley Lee.

RUTH. *John Stanley Lee*?

STANLEY. Quite so. He's sometimes called—Jack.

RUTH. How—how interesting!

STANLEY. Yes, isn't it? Julie calls him Jack.

RUTH. But why should we talk of Mr. Lee? It seems that we've already discussed him quite thoroughly.

STANLEY. Almost thoroughly enough to make a paragraph in tomorrow's paper.

RUTH. What—what do you mean by that?

STANLEY (*innocently*). Why, *nothing*. Why should I? Julie says—

RUTH (*impatiently*). Oh, let's leave Julie out of the question!

STANLEY. Agreed. (*After a moment.*) I wonder if you know of what inestimable value you have been to Stanley Lee.

RUTH. I'm afraid I don't.

STANLEY. You've helped him solve a difficult problem.

RUTH. Really—I don't understand.

STANLEY. The disposition of the memorial fund has worried him. He wants to be sure that any decision he may make is the right one. When I tell him of your suggestion of the children's hospital—

RUTH (*interrupting*). Wait—please—

STANLEY (*ignoring the interruption*). And the scholarship, he will see an end of his troubles.

RUTH. I am very sure that what I said—impulsively—can in no way affect Mr. Lee's plans.

STANLEY. Oh, but I know it *can*!

RUTH. Then I am forced to say that I do not care to be quoted—nor to be mentioned to your friend.

STANLEY. Oh, come, now.

RUTH. Oh, I mean it.

STANLEY. Why should you take such a stand? What possible offence could there be in my repeating the little interview which we have had?

RUTH. The mere fact that I don't want it repeated is answer enough.

STANLEY (*thoughtfully*). Oh, I see. You feel about this just as Lee does about newspaper notoriety.

RUTH (*icily*). I cannot see that the two cases are parallel.

STANLEY. Perhaps not. (*Chuckles.*) Anyway, old Stan will have a chance to make his statement to the city officials before the diabolical papers get hold of it.

RUTH (*rising*). Mr. Lee, I've a confession to make. (*As STANLEY rises in apparent surprise.*) Oh, yes, I know who you are. I've known ever since I spied you from the win-

dow and called you in, inventing my story as I went along. (*As he attempts to speak.*) You followed my lead cleverly—too cleverly for me to keep up—for you even guessed my name. You have doubtless enjoyed the role into which I thrust you, but—(*with an effort*) I am a reporter on the "Morning Star," Mr. Lee, and all day I have tried—vainly—to have an interview with you. When I saw you from the window, it seemed my opportunity, and I seized it, trusting that my wits and your possible interest in the following up of the situation would give me such information as could be woven into a newspaper story.

STANLEY. Won't you let me—

RUTH (*interrupting*). Wait. It was a despicable thing to do—oh, I see it now—but I did so want to succeed. For it meant—so much to me. You've never been on the staff of a daily paper, have you? (STANLEY *shakes his head.*) Then you do not know how a struggling journalist longs for a "scoop." (*He attempts to speak.*) Please let me say one more word—just *this*. I shall not make copy of our interview this afternoon. I'm ashamed of my duplicity.

STANLEY. My dear Miss King—

RUTH (*starting*). You know my name?

STANLEY. I've known—*you*—since I entered this room. My reporter friend on the rival paper pointed you out as we came from the club. I recognized your name as the one which had been on the card sent up to me, and when you called me—here—I understood immediately just why it was.

RUTH. My humiliation is quite complete.

STANLEY. I should have declared the mistaken identity, I suppose, but the temptation was great, and I longed to play the part you had given me. (*After a moment.*) Will you forgive me?

RUTH (*with downcast eyes*). I—forgive?

STANLEY. I'll try to make amends; for all I've told you today is for you to handle as you choose. I shall build a hospital and give a scholarship—and your paper shall be the first to announce it. I haven't meant to be boorish about

interviews. I only wished to be sure of my plans before confiding them to the press.

RUTH. You are doing this—for pity.

STANLEY. Oh, no, I'm not. I'm doing it for two very selfish reasons. First, because I wish to be quoted correctly; second, because I am grateful to you for the very pleasant afternoon I've had for many days, and (*laughingly*) to Julie for allowing me to be her temporary husband.

RUTH. There really isn't any Julie.

STANLEY. I shall always be indebted to her, just the same. (*He pauses.*) Will you write the story?

RUTH. Someway—I can't.

STANLEY. Please. It will be a feather in your cap.

RUTH (*laughingly*). Are you insinuating that I need another one?

STANLEY (*coaxingly*). Will you write the story—for *me*?

RUTH (*suddenly*). I will—and thank you! (*Extends both hands. He takes them.*)

STANLEY (*retaining her hands*). The last thing Julie said to me was, "You must take Ruth to dinner and—if she can spare the time—to the theater." (RUTH *lowers her eyes but makes no response.*) Well?

RUTH (*looking steadfastly at him*). That will be a lovely sequel to—(*hesitates*)

STANLEY (*eagerly*). To what?

RUTH (*laughingly*). My first scoop!

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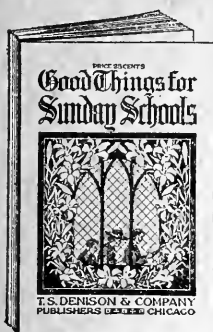
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Pickles for Two, 15 min.	2	
Pooh Bah of Peaceton, 35 min.	2	2
Prof. Black's Funnygraph, 15 m.	6	
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